

**U.S. COMMISSION
ON INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM**

PRESS CONFERENCE

RELEASE OF USCIRF'S POLICY FOCUS ON CHINA

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**CAPITOL HILL
WASHINGTON, D.C.**

USCIRF

**Michael Cromartie, USCIRF Chair
Preeta D. Bansal, USCIRF Commissioner
Richard D. Land, USCIRF Commissioner**

MEMBERS OF CONGRESS

**Representative Nancy Pelosi (D-CA)
Representative Frank Wolf (R-VA)
Representative Christopher Smith (R-NJ)
Representative Tom Lantos (D-CA)
Representative Mark Kennedy (R-MN)**

*Transcript by:
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REPRESENTATIVE NANCY PELOSI (D-CA): Good afternoon. Thank you all for coming.

I'm honored to join my colleague, Congressman Frank Wolf, as well as my fellow Californian, Tom Lantos; Congressman Kennedy. I guess we're expecting Mr. – Congressman Wolf I mentioned, and Congressman Chris Smith, is he joining us? Well, there's a bill on the floor that Mr. Wolf is managing, so he will be with us momentarily.

And here's – okay, we're pleased to have Chris Smith. Hi, Harry! Harry Wu – what an honor to have you in our office. Thank you for coming.

Back to Mr. Wolf – an unmatched leader in the commitment to human rights from Sudan to Sierra Leone, to China and Tibet, Frank Wolf has used his position in Congress to give a voice to the suffering of people all over the world, and we all want to commend and thank Congressman Wolf – when he gets here.

I also have been very pleased that – to be here with my colleague from California, Mr. Lantos, who has for years been the chair – co-chair of the Human Right Caucus in the Congress. I've said before that people all over the world are equally in his debt; people who don't even know his name or whose names he doesn't know because he's been their champion.

And Chris Smith – oh, my, Chris, we've been through many battles together, haven't we – for human rights all over the world, and Chris knows the high regard in which I hold his credentials as a champion for human rights in our country, and we welcome you, Mr. Kennedy, to the fold in our struggle for human rights.

We commend the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom for completing a comprehensive and insightful report on religious freedom in China. The Commissioners, including Michael Cromartie, whom we'll be hearing from, as well as Preeta Bansal and Commissioner Richard Land are with us today presenting this excellent report, and they are shining a bright light on the continued crackdown on Chinese citizens who seek freedom of religion, speech and assembly.

This past August, the International Religious Freedom Commission visited China and documented the Chinese government's intensified crackdown on religious freedom. Over the past year, the Chinese government has tightened its control over religious leaders, journalists, intellectuals, the Internet and non-governmental organizations; violated the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief, contravening both the Chinese constitution and international norms; intensified a campaign to bring out all unregistered religious activity under government control by enticement or by force. They continue to control the Uighur Muslim religious activity. They require Tibetans to

denounce his holiness, the Dali Lama, as the spiritual leader of Tibetans; imprison individuals for owning pictures of the Dali Lama; and prohibited any public display of devotion to him. Just a week before the president goes to China, as you know, his holiness is in Washington, D.C.

For too long the United States has pursued a policy of trickle-down liberty; first economic freedom and then political freedom and religious freedom will follow. The 16 years since Tiananmen have exposed this policy as the illusion that it is. Despite more than a decade of concessions from Washington, our trade deficit with China has grown from \$2 million -- \$2 billion a year to over \$2 billion a week.

Remember, Chris and Tom, when we started you trying to use leverage for human rights in China. We thought with a 2 to \$3 billion annual budget we would have tremendous leverage. Little did we know that, despite all the talk that our engagement was going to reduce barriers, et cetera, and the trade would become fairer, instead those obstacles still remain and we're at a deficit of about 2 to \$3 billion a week. Over a third of China's exports come to the United States; only 4 percent of our exports are allowed into China.

President Bush will travel to China next week to visit with President Hu Jintao. My colleagues and I will be requesting that he make human rights a top priority in the bilateral agenda. We once again call on Beijing to release the thousands of prisoners of conscience whose only crime is to demand their basic human freedom.

The United States government should press for the release of the Panchen Lama, who has not been seen in more than a decade after being kidnapped by the Chinese government. Think of it. This was the successor to the Dalai Lama. The Chinese government has kidnapped him as a small child -- hasn't been seen in over a decade. We also call for the release of Dr. Yang Jianli, a pro-democracy activist and permanent U.S. resident who was arrested in 2002, and subsequently sentenced to five years in prison.

We all want a bright future for China and a wonderful relationship between our two countries -- politically, economically, culturally, diplomatically and in every way. That is why we have to push for change. I hope that one day the world's most populous nation can soon be the world's most populous democracy.

And in that spirit, I wish to yield to the very distinguish gentlemen whom I described earlier: champion for human rights, a model to us all, unsurpassed in his effectiveness and his ardor. Chairman Frank Wolf.

REPRESENTATIVE FRANK WOLF (R-VA): I thank you, Nancy. Thank you very much.

I'm glad to be here with Minority Leader Pelosi and Chairman Lantos -- Mr. Lantos and Chairman Davis and the other members, and Mr. Kennedy back here, too. And I recall the heated annual debates in Congress surrounding most-favored-nation

trade status, and ultimately permanent normal trade relations for China. The coalition that battled granting China this privilege faced an almost certain perennial loss. Even so, it served as a valuable forum in which to highlight just what kind of country we are dealing with with regard to China.

China – the list of egregious actions laid at the feet of the communist government of the People's Republic of China is long and spans decades. Human rights abuses, religious persecution, including torture and imprisonment, slave labor practices, forced sterilization, espionage. I couldn't believe it – on Friday I was watching the news and saw that China was spying and getting some of the best technology that we had for the B-1 bomber – spying against our government, and yet – I was not surprised, but I thought maybe the Bush administration would say more, but they really didn't. Also spying operations against U.S. businesses, software piracy, intellectual property threat and other activities like that.

At the time, many argued with tremendous passion – business interests foremost among them. They said if we trade with China this way and take MFN out, it would change China, but it has become painfully evident that economic freedom has not resulted in greater political or religious freedom.

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, which Nancy Pelosi and Tom and Chris were so helpful in getting passed several years ago, returned from a two-week trip to China. Their findings indicated the plight of people of faith in China is deteriorating. The communist government engages in indiscriminate repression, arrest and torture of varied faiths, targeting Uighur Muslim populations, the underground Protestant and Catholic house churches, Tibetan Buddhists and the Falun Gong spiritual movement. In short, the communist government views religion as a threat to their power and acts accordingly.

Those operating outside state control face fines and raids and harassment, imprisonment and torture, and even death. One of the more odious tools of repression, as the report indicates, is the Laogai prison system. If you want to know what the Laogai is, just talk to Harry – to Harry. I see now Harry Wu out there. Seventeen years in a Laogai prison and they're still operating today as if nothing has ever changed.

And this morning I was honored to join with Congresswoman Pelosi and Congressman Smith in introducing legislation that shines a light on Laogai, a system made up of more than 1,000 jails where prisoners are afforded no legal rights, are forced to work in deplorable conditions for up to 16 hours a day, are often tortured to induce confession, and are forced to relinquish their religious faith. There are more than a thousand documented cases per year of organ harvesting where they shoot people. You need a kidney? Fifty thousand dollars, we'll take your blood type, we'll go into the prisons, we'll find somebody, we'll execute them and then you can get your organ transplant.

President Bush is scheduled to visit China in days ahead, which presents him with an opportunity, and I urge the president, speak out boldly, not privately. One of the hallmarks of President Reagan was when President Reagan spoke out, he spoke out publicly. It's like in politics; we've all been there when somebody tells us, "Wolf, I'm really for you, but I just don't want to be publicly identified with you." (Laughter.) Speak out boldly, speak out publicly and send a message. Tell them how important these things – raise the Commission's finding at the highest levels.

Also, members of Congress and members of the Bush administration, when they go to China, ought to replicate what used to be done in the past. They should meet with the dissidents, go to their churches, go to the house churches, go to the underground church. I've talked to a number of those pastors. They say, we'll stand with you, we will publicly be with you. And some tell me the administration says, oh, I don't want to get them in trouble. They're saying we will stand with them, the same way they did in the Carter administration and the Reagan administration. The secretaries of Commerce and State would go over there and meet with the Soviet dissidents. They should do exactly the same in the Bush administration.

China constitutes one-fifth of the world population – one-fifth, one out of five people. It should be of paramount concern to the United States, a nation founded by men and women fleeing religious persecution, that 1.3 billion Chinese do not have even the most basic guarantees of freedom of worship and conscience.

We wake up today – you saw the article the other day. Here it says, "Protestant pastor" – and I met with some of these people. Three weeks ago their lawyer was over here in my district office – Protestant pastor in China convicted for printing the word – for printing the gospel, for printing something that talks about helping the poor and doing things like that. There's no excuse for those things to take place, so I'm pleased to be here with Nancy.

And next we're going to hear from Michael Cromartie, then I think Mr. – and then –

REP. PELOSI: Michael will speak – so Chairman Cromartie will speak –

REP. WOLF: The chairman and then Mr. Lantos, Mr. Smith and Mr. Kennedy. Okay, thank you.

REP. PELOSI: I think you can put it on the table and they're going to speak to it.

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you, Leader Pelosi, for having us. And Congressman Wolf, thank you for your courageous work over so many years. We're grateful. And thank you, Congressmen Lantos and Smith and Kennedy, for being here. Thank you very much.

Thank you all for being here today. I'm Michael Cromartie, chairman of the Commission. With me today are two of my fellow Commissioners, who will also be here for the Q&A.

In August 2005, the Commission traveled to China to engage the senior officials responsible for the management of religious affairs – and I want to underline the word “management,” and the protection of human rights in China, and to meet with representatives of the – China's government-approved religious communities. Seven Commissioners traveled to China. While we were in China Commissioners raised questions about Chinese law and international human rights norms, the control and management of religious affairs, religious education of minors, new regulations on cults and religious affairs, the unique situation in Xinjiang, in Tibet, and the condition of North Korean asylum seekers in China. The Commission also raised specific cases of concern with law enforcement officials. The Chinese government denied Commission requests for access to several prominent religious leaders.

The delegation was not able to meet, for instance, and talk freely and privately with religious leaders of its own choosing; however, a few Chinese religious leaders did offer honest assessments at the risk of their own personal safety. And we would note that the Chinese government officials were present at all meetings, including those with religious leaders and others who were not part of the government. All our delegation's interactions and activities were monitored and closely controlled by government representatives.

The Commission continues to find that the Chinese government systematically violates the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion or belief, contravening both the Chinese constitution and international human rights norms. Moreover, on the basis of our trip, as well as ongoing analysis, the Commission has concluded that the scope of political openness and public activism, and civil individual freedoms is actually now narrowing in China. Economic freedom, as some had hoped, has not – has not led to more religious, political freedom and human rights protections. Recent campaigns to halt foreign influence, to stamp out, quote, “evil cults,” and to strike hard against ethnic separatism and religious extremism have occasioned some of the country's most brutal human rights abuses.

Because unregistered religious activity is illegal, unregistered Protestants and Catholics have been increasingly harassed, detained and imprisoned in recent years, and a campaign is underway to bring unregistered religious activity under government control, either by enticement or by force.

Now since March 2005, there have been three large-scale raids with over a hundred people arrested. Security forces are targeting leadership training, university Bible studies, missionary activities, and churches whose congregations include prominent Chinese intellectuals. At least 33 bishops and priests from the unregistered Catholic Church remain in prison for religious activity.

Groups determined to be cults are brutally suppressed, as is evidenced by the crackdown on Falun Gong and other spiritual movements. The Chinese government, we would add, is using the war on terror as a pretext to monitor and control Uighur Muslim religious activity. The government also uses terrorist concerns to restrict Commission activity in Xinjiang, claiming that – and this happened when we arrived there – claiming that elements of al Qaeda were targeting the Commission. The threat, later found out to be not credible, was used to restrict Commission activities and to monitor our contact with local people.

China's religious policies have produced ongoing tensions in Xinjiang and Tibet, where crackdowns on religious activity are often harsher than in other parts of China, and the Chinese government continues to tightly restrict the religious education of minors. In Tibet, government officials claim that one of their goals was to eliminate the influence of the Dalai Lama.

Now on the basis of – oh, and let me just add that the Commission raised with Chinese officials the issue of North Korean refugees in China who, after fleeing starvation and persecution in North Korea, face harsh conditions when they cross the border into China.

On the basis of our findings, the Commission had made a number of recommendations for U.S. policy, and those recommendations may be found beginning on page 16 of the Commission's report.

Thank you and we look forward to your questions.

REP. PELOSI: Mr. Lantos, Mr. Smith, Mr. Kennedy.

REPRESENTATIVE TOM LANTOS (D-CA): Thank you, Madam Leader.

Before I say a word about the work of the Commission, the upcoming visit of the president to China, let me say a word about Congresswoman Pelosi. When she came here to Congress, she came with a passion for human rights, and it is a matter of immense pleasure and joy and pride for me, as her friend and neighbor in San Francisco, to see that her commitment to human rights has only been strengthened in her new role as the Democratic Leader. And I'm delighted that, with her myriad responsibilities, she considers human rights nevertheless the number one priority.

I have good news and I have bad news. The good news is that in the long struggle for human rights, we have had some major achievements. The Soviet Union no longer exists, and I remember countless press conferences like this on behalf of Sharansky and others, and all of these things are now just vignettes in history. Apartheid South Africa no longer exists, and that was a long and bitter and painful struggle leading to victory.

But I am profoundly disturbed that despite the spectacular achievements of China in the field of economic development that Ms. Pelosi so brilliantly summarized, human

rights conditions have not improved and, in many respects, have deteriorated. And in this context I think the Commission deserves great credit for its excellent report.

Now the timing of the report could not be more perfect. The president is about to leave for China, and we have a long list of items with China with which we are engaged ranging from the six-party talks involving North Korea giving up its nuclear weapons to dealing cooperatively on the avian flu epidemic. But I earnestly hope and I call on the president to use his time on the plane to Asia to read this report and to raise, both publicly and privately, the continued suppression of religious freedom and so many other freedoms in China.

I only want to mention two specific items. One is the Tibetan Buddhists and the second is Falun Gong. Eighteen years ago at my invitation, his holiness the Dalai Lama came to the Capitol. We met in a small, shabby conference room. He would not be seen by the president, the vice president, the secretary of State, or the leaders of Congress. How times have changed. His visit now is a major social and diplomatic event in this capital, and I must say that, as the procession went on, first the State Department was willing to see him, then the vice president with the president dropping by, then the president, then the congressional leadership, and then Richard Gere. His holiness and I appeared on Larry King Live, which is the ultimate achievement in this world.
(Laughter.)

Now the Dalai Lama offers China an opportunity to gain some credibility with the civilized world, and I call on the Chinese leadership to open serious discussions with the Dalai Lama, one of the few great leaders on our planet with moral authority. It is outrageous, as Leader Pelosi indicated, that the Panchen Lama has basically disappeared. It is an outrage that the Dalai Lama is not allowed openly to fight for the religious and cultural rights of his people.

The Falun Gong is a very painful chapter in modern China's history. Peaceful practitioners of Falun Gong should be allowed to function without harassment, persecution, imprisonment and worse. We are calling on the Chinese government, as we have for decades, that their greatness as a culture and civilization, their enormous successes in the economic arena are shadowed by the cloud of their continued persecution of religious freedom, political liberty, media freedom, and the attributes – all of the attributes of a civilized and free society. We honestly hope that the president's visit will make a dent in what continues to be a very sad saga.

Thank you.

REP. PELOSI: Thank you, Mr. Lantos.

REPRESENTATIVE CHRIS SMITH (R-NJ): Thank you. My name is Chris Smith. I represent a district in New Jersey. I chair the Africa, Global Human Rights, International Ops Committee, and thank you very much for hosting this very important briefing or press conference. And let me just say this is one of those issues – one of those

rare issues indeed where we have true bipartisanship. There is not a bit of difference between Nancy or Tom or Frank or Mark Kennedy or any of us when it comes to this issue. Some want to prosecute the fight differently than others, but we are certainly united in trying to get the Chinese government to live up to its internationally recognized obligations.

Let me also say that in this room we have Rebiya Kadeer, who is a human rights activist and who recently gained her freedom here in the United States, and it's so great to welcome you here; and the great Harry Wu, as has been mentioned. Harry Wu, when he first was – gained freedom in the United States, organized a hearing that I chaired on the Laogai. He brought in six people, all of whom have suffered in the Laogai in China. Palden Gyatso, who is a Buddhist monk, tried to get into the building – Rayburn Building – this was in the late 1990s, and was bringing with him the instruments of torture that are routinely employed against political and religious dissidents – or people who just want to practice his or her faith as they would like. He was stopped by security. They saw those implements of torture and were aghast at it. We had to go down and escort him in, and when he held up the cattle prods and the other instruments that are, again, routinely – every day employed by the Chinese government, it made all of us – our jaws drop to know that people were being so maltreated each and every day.

The Chinese government is guilty of systematic torture against religious believers. I would note Frank Wolf and I were in China on one trip and – a couple of trips, and on one of those trips we met with Bishop Shu of Baoding province, a Roman Catholic bishop. Bishop Shu has spent in excess of 27 years – a Roman Catholic bishop who, when I met with him and he celebrated mass in his small, dingy apartment in Beijing and then was rearrested right after that, he had absolutely no malice for the Chinese dictatorship. He had love and compassion, and he said that he prayed for them each and every day. This man is being held again in confinement in China and is now very elderly and recently was seen in a hospital apparently having been roughed up. He had bruises all over his face, and he is just one of many.

Tom Lantos mentioned the Dalai Lama and the Buddhists, the Uighurs, the Falun Gong, who are routinely tortured to death. Right to the very point that they die; that's how bad the torture is against religious believers, and the whole entire underground church, Protestant and Catholic, continue to suffer enormously.

I want to thank the International Religious Freedom Commission for doing an extraordinary job again this year in writing a report that speaks truth to power. Despite the fact that their trip, the venues, the interlocutors with whom they met with was carefully managed, stage managed by the government, they were able to pierce through that and to see what was really happening in the People's Republic of China, and have written a very, very powerful document that I commend to each and every one of you because, again, it tells the truth about what is happening China.

Next Tuesday, my Subcommittee on International Ops, Global Human Rights in Africa will chair a hearing on this document and we will go into further detail as to what it says and the recommendations, and there are many made by the Commission.

Let me also just say that – and, again, I hope everybody will read it – things can change despite this systematic repression of religious belief, faith in God. And even faith when it comes to the spiritual practice of Falun Gong is spreading. The people will not allow themselves to be repressed, and they have paid a very dear price, but the more repression occurs, the greater the spread of the faith.

Let me also say that all of us are calling on President Bush to speak very, very precisely about what we know and what we expect of the Chinese government. For too long they have gotten away with infamous and horrific behavior when it comes to human rights from the one-child-per-couple policy, which relies on forced abortion and coercion, to the ongoing repression of those who were incarcerated right after Tiananmen Square.

Frank and I went to Beijing Prison Number One. We saw the men whose heads were shaved reminiscent of those who had shaved heads and were emaciated from Auschwitz and Dachau. We saw 40 Tiananmen Square protestors who were there in Beijing Prison Number One. There are still hundreds and hundreds of those who are still languishing in prison.

And let me also say, and let me conclude with this, the repression is systematic in a whole host of other areas. We plan on having a hearing on the Internet and on the ongoing repression of free conscience and expression, and it is perhaps a subject for another press conference. But everywhere you turn the repression is ongoing and systematic and government thugs are always right around the corner or in the next room ready to burst in. Religious freedom is the first freedom and we hope and we pray and we will work and use every tool at our disposal to promote this vital important human right, and that is why we're so joined together Democrat and Republican. Thank you.

MS. PELOSI: Thank you – oh, Mark – Mr. Kennedy please.

MARK KENNEDY (R-MN): Well, thank you. Thank you all, those who stand with us to stand firm for religious freedom. And if America stands for anything, it stands for freedom. And as Chris said, possibly the hardest for a country to give but the most important for us to have is religious freedom and we must all push and advocate for that.

I have made it a practice of mine whenever in a foreign country on an official trip to ask to meet in my case with the local Catholic bishops or member of the church from which I have practiced not just to talk about Catholic religious freedom but for all religious freedom. And within that context, when I went to China recently in May, I did the same thing. And at the same time that you're hearing words of, yes, we're open; the underground church is small, during that very same time we hear reports of continued repressions going on within the church during our visit.

I also met with members of the Chinese government. And as part of meetings, press with the prisoners of conscience, religious prisoners, and pushing for religious freedom as well as for releasing those that they have taken into prison. We need to all continue to do that.

You know, it's been expressed – some of the horrendous draconian things that Chris talked about, but we need to even move beyond that to just a simple everyday ability to practice your faith. There is great stuff in this report, but I have the experience from a member of my family that is spending some time in China recently, being as we taught them somebody that should regularly attend services kneeling down praying in church and having a government official come up while they are kneeling down asking them for a copy of their passport.

That is one case in point that confirms that the practice of your religion, the practice of your rights, your basic right is not currently being allowed in China. If China is to be welcomed as a great country into the family of nations, it has to rise to the level of protecting those freedoms, we must continue to encourage them, prod them towards that end.

I would also confirm that there is hope that we can have change. I recently had a chance to be in Hungary, a country that previously under Soviet regimes had also similar prosecution of religion. Having had a chance to have Sunday mass at St. Stephens downtown, I saw a church filled with young and old in a vibrant practice of their faith. And it's that type of dramatic change that we have seen in the Eastern bloc that we want to see in China. It must be the goal of this government. I stand with those that push towards that end. Thank you all for being here.

MS. PELOSI: Thank you all, my colleagues, for being here. And, again, I want to commend the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom for this very excellent report. This is very timely as Mr. Lantos and others have said because it comes right at the – a week before the president's trip to China. It comes at a time when His Holiness the Dalai Lama is here in Washington, D.C.

I did attend that meeting that Mr. Lantos talked about 18 years ago. It was one of the first things I did when I came to Congress. And I felt very honored to be invited by him in his capacity as Chair of the Human Rights Caucus even way back then to meeting with His Holiness where he laid out his points, including autonomy, which of course the Chinese government has never recognized.

But I have to tell you, Mr. Lantos, that we have all come so far on this that on Sunday I will have the privilege of introducing His Holiness to 16,000 people. And while we talk about the people in power in Washington who will receive him, he is always received magnificently by the people of America. He has great religious authority, great moral authority, and, again, while he is here, it is important for us to have this policy focus on China. I thank the – please convey our gratitude to the other members of the Commission.

With that, we will be pleased to take any questions that you may have. Any questions?

Q: Has anyone received any assurances that the president will take up the issues of human trafficking in North Korea during these talks?

MR. CROMARTIE: Yes, sir. And let me introduce Commissioner Land and Commissioner Bansal here with us. No, we don't have any assurances of that. We have sent a letter to the president today along with a copy of these recommendations. And he will be receiving that today, but he has not responded and given us any assurances. We look forward to that. What is that? Go ahead quickly. Yes, please.

REP. SMITH: Two weeks ago, Congressman Jim Leach, who chairs the Asia Committee and I co-chaired a hearing on human rights – implementation of the human rights in North Korea Act. And we put a very, very strong emphasis on the issue of the refugees in China's non-compliance with their obligations under the Refugee Convention. They are in blatant violation of those obligations.

And from people within the State Department, we got assurances that it is on their list of priorities and hopefully it will be conveyed to the president. That is in part what we are trying to do here as well. And thankfully the Commission has made very valid and concrete recommendations along those lines as well.

So I think the president will get the message. The reason why we had the hearing two weeks ago frankly was to convey that message. And we will again have the hearing on Tuesday to further amplify the message, how important it is that the president raises it.

I do believe – and Dr. Rice has said this. I have spoken to her personally about religious freedom in China. She is very strong on this issue, and I think that is important. This is not a talking point somewhere on a list of bullets on a page. For her it's something she very deeply believes in and I believe likewise for the president.

So I am confident – the question is whether or not it is done consistently in every meeting they have to let the Chinese government know that we are not kidding. It is about time. Routinely the Chinese government will have some kind of statement that they make. They did it when Jiang Zemin came over here. They were going to sign the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and they got all of the good will you could possibly get from that gesture, and then nothing happens. They do that over and over again. We want no more promises; we want deeds.

MS. PELOSI: Mr. Wolf and I, Mr. Smith and Mr. Lantos always had the same standard for President Clinton when he went to China as well. We wanted to have a public statement about the concern that the American people have for human rights, including religious freedom – this one being very important because this is where you get punished for what you think and what you believe. And it is how can you change what

you think and what you believe. It is impossible. It is only possible for the Chinese government to change their attitude and their repression of the believers.

Q: Yes, a question. President Bush I believe – it was three years ago when he visited China – spoke live on Chinese television before Chinese students – a half hour speech about religious freedom. There is every indication he brought it up in private meetings. And as has been said, this has been brought up repeatedly and yet nothing seems to change. What hope is there that anything will given that the Chinese probably feel like they need us for North Korea, for trade, for any number of other issues?

MS. PELOSI: Well, I am going to yield to my colleagues, but Mr. Lantos taught us the day we all arrived here, those of us who are human rights advocates, that this is a very long road; you can never give up hope. And that is – we just have to keep on trying and hope that the brighter the spotlight that is placed on the repression, the sooner the freedom will be granted. And that is why this report – this is a spotlight on repression in China, which documents and suggests opportunities for hope. Anyone else?

MR. LANTOS: Well, I just would add a word. What China needs more than anything else is a Chinese Gorbachev. There has to be somebody in the Chinese leadership who at some point becomes acceptable and recognizes that for Chinese culture and civilization to fulfill its destiny, it has to become a more open and free society.

MS. PELOSI: And I might just again weigh in and say that the week that the president is in China, that week will mark the 90th anniversary or birthday of Hu Yaobang, the former secretary general of the Communist Party. He was a Gorbachev for China. However, in 1987 he was driven out the party leadership because he favored democratic reform and resisted – '89 – resisted the crackdown on student protests. Two years later his death brought the students back. That was in '89. That is what brought the students into Tiananmen Square and supported the person they called “Mr. Democracy.”

So there are all of these coincidences. His Holiness the Dalai Lama here this week as the president prepares to go on his trip arriving in China and the week of Hu Yaobang's 90th birthday, his being revered as “Mr. Democracy” there. And, again, it was shortly after his death and other students coming into the square that the Tiananmen Square massacre happened. Hopefully on the 90th anniversary of his birth there will be some opening, some – what would we call it? Perestroika? Or is that – (chuckles).

MR. SMITH: Can I just say, one of the geniuses of Frank Wolf's bill was that it prescribes a number of actions that the administration can take. This is the seventh year that China has been designated a country of particular concern because of its egregious human rights violations in the area of religious freedom. We're calling on the president to do in like manner what he did with Vietnam, where a number – and it remains to be seen whether or not Vietnam delivers on any of the so-called actionable items that are in the MOU with Vietnam, but to say here are some things you need to do or else there will be sanctions imposed upon the People's Republic of China – without a penalty phase, the Chinese government will just obstruct and it will be business as usual. So we're calling

on the president to enter into that kind of dialogue so that these actionable items – and there is a vast array of things that can be done in the area of penalty – need to be imposed right now.

Let me also say there is – the Chinese government, the more this obsession with persecuting people of faith occurs, the more they bring dishonor on their own government and they bring – and the scrutiny is increasing, even amongst many of our European allies. I chair the Helsinki Commission and meet routinely with upwards of 250 to 300 parliamentarians from 55 countries that make up the OSCE. I bring up China every time I talk to those individuals, and they're growing – there is a growing concern among these people, especially the Eastern Europeans recently liberated. Mention was made of Hungary, Romania, the Central Europeans, Poland. They have a certain standing as well to bring up the issue of religious persecution because they suffered it most recently in Europe. So I think – but an MOU with China is needed now.

REP. WOLF: Well, I agree with Nancy and Tom and Chris. What Nancy said, it takes a while. Jackson-Vanik passed. No one in this room thought really that we would ever finally see it to be successful. Probably nobody here, if I hooked you all up to a lie detector test, ever thought that in 1987 the Berlin Wall was going to fall in 1989, but it did because of people like President Reagan and President Carter and Senator Jackson and people like that, and Congressman Vanik, and there are in China today – some of them are here – there are Solzhenitsyns in China today. There are Sharanskys in China today. There are Sakharovs in China today, and this guy here, the lawyers and the ministers that are speaking out. So they will be – sometimes I almost think that when I watch China, that they have found Ceausescu's playbook and they don't understand what they're really doing. They are doing more to harm their own government. They will change, and I believe – I firmly believe that I will live to see freedom and democracy and openness in China. So, as Nancy said, it just takes a little bit of time.

Q: (Off mike.)

REP. PELOSI: Before you answer, Mr. Chairman, we have a vote and it's down to the last few minutes, so we'll have to thank you all for coming and thank you all for your magnificent work and your leadership. Thank you. (Cross talk.) Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CROMARTIE: I have no information on the intelligence that you're speaking of. I know the intelligence we received was totally bogus, unfounded. There was no evidence. It seemed like an attempt to intimidate us but also control us. As far as the intelligence you're talking about right now, I know nothing about it, but thank you for the question.

Richard?

MR. LAND: Can I just say too, this was true – I'm Richard Land – this was true on our trip to China and it's been true on every trip that I have taken with the

Commission. I want to commend our State Department personnel who serve in our embassies. I have found them to be uniformly helpful, to be superb in their performance of their duties, and no more so than during our trip to China. We were there for over two weeks, just about 15 days, and I can just tell you this: The United States of America has put its A team in our embassy in Beijing. They are superb from top to bottom. They were extremely helpful, extremely well informed, and were very strong in challenging the Chinese officials when they came out with this bogus al Qaeda threat and said, you know, if this is true, then how come our embassy hasn't been informed, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera, and we saw some backtracking pretty quickly.

MR. CROMARTIE: Yes, ma'am?

Q: (Off mike.)

MR. CROMARTIE: Absolutely. Glad to.

MS. BANSAL: We in fact found – I'm Preeta Bansal, one of the Commissioners. We in fact found, when we arrived in Beijing, that our own website had been blocked. So some of the things that Congressman Smith was talking about in terms of Internet repression we certainly experienced firsthand.

I would also just add that one of the things that was most striking to me – you talk about kind of human rights values and inculcating them and teaching them to children – one of the things that really struck me as we had our dialogue with the Chinese government officials was the complete disconnect as to what the vocabulary even was about human rights. You know, they spoke of freedom of religion as kind of a government-allowed – matter of government approval. Whenever they said religion is growing under our watchful eye and under our very strict controls, that somehow meant freedom of religion. And what they didn't seem to get or they cynically chose not to get, as we continually repeated to them, is that freedom of religion is the freedom from state control. It's a private sphere that's inviolate, and it's an individual sphere.

And it was just a complete disconnect. They kept showing us, you know, one religious group after another religious group that was under their watchful eye, saying, here, look, we have so much religion, this is so great, how can you possibly think we don't have religion? And of course the missing phrase in all of that was "freedom."

MR. LAND: And we experienced some censorship as well. In some of our meetings with the Chinese religious leaders, the Chinese government had a translator and the State Department provided a translator for us. And that was very wise on our State Department's part because we found that the answers that were given to our questions were sometimes not completely translated. There were omissions. (Audio break, tape change) – giving the complete answer and not translating the complete answer. She was censoring it as she went along. And then when we were out in the autonomous regions, we were meeting with Muslim leaders, and several times we asked Muslim leaders questions and Chinese government officials answered, not the Muslim leaders, which

gives you an idea of what passes for freedom of speech in the People's Republic of China.

MR. CROMARTIE: The lady in the red and then the gentleman will go after her.

Q: (Off mike.)

MR. LAND: How many did we meet with in Xinjiang, about – about 20?

MS. BANSAL: We were both in Urumchi and Kashgar.

MR. LAND: I say a total of between 20 and 25, and, yes, we were monitored every step of the way. In fact –

MS. BANSAL: Two for one.

MR. LAND: Yeah, well, in fact, I had the distinct impression that when we were out of the room our belongings were gone through. I got to where I put my dirty socks and underwear on top just to give them a little extra problem.

(Laughter.)

MR. CROMARTIE: This gentleman right there. Yes, sir?

Q: (Off mike.)

MR. CROMARTIE: Somebody's tape just went off.

Q: (Off mike.)

MS. BANSAL: We didn't have direct experience with that.

MR. CROMARTIE: (Off mike.)

MS. BANSAL: We did not have direct experience with that. We weren't exposed to both of the groups.

MR. CROMARTIE: Yes, sir.

Q: (Off mike.)

MR. CROMARTIE: We have met privately with some people in the administration and talked about that. We weren't able to put it in the report. The report was already on the way to the printer when that news came out.

Before you, this lady here in the yellow.

Q: (Off mike.)

(Cross talk.)

MR. CROMARTIE: We can say it in unison if you like. Every group –

MS. BANSAL: We've been – in our reports we've been consistent in including all of the persecuted groups and the groups of conscience that we believe are worthy of attention, and Falun Gong has certainly been high among that list. And I don't believe there is any indication that President Bush has backed away from that.

MR. LAND: We mentioned in it numerous of our meetings while we were in China, and we've mentioned it in our report. I think every year we've recommended they be a country of particular concern.

MR. CROMARTIE: Commissioner Land, you also have an anecdote for us about every time a group was brought up.

MR. LAND: Well, there was no group that got a more instantaneous reaction. If the meetings were getting a little tedious we could always just mention Falun Gong, and it was like a Skinnerian stimulus response. "Evil cult" just came out, just one word, sort of a uniform phrase: "evil cult." And then they would just go into a long, practiced tirade. It is clear that the government officials that we met with, that Falun Gong is a particular burr under their saddle. And so we just continued to mention it.

MR. CROMARTIE: And they were very eager to convince us that they were an evil cult. I mean, they went to great lengths to try to do that.

MR. LAND: Slide shows, interviews with –

MR. CROMARTIE: Personal testimonies.

MR. LAND: Personal testimonies from former Falun Gong "evil cult" members, quote, unquote, and as you can tell, we didn't buy the ruse.

MS. BANSAL: One of the things – I mean, in our discussions with them about evil cults, one of the things that those discussions underscored was the extent of the ambiguity, the room for maneuvering in the government regulations on religion. We asked them to define "evil cult," why Falun Gong fell within that, and it was all very circular – you know, any activity that wasn't normal was illegal, and any activity was illegal if it wasn't normal. So it just – it showed to me particularly the extent to which this really is – all of this talk about the rule of law and the legalization of religion and the need to create a legal regime was really talk about rule by law. It's about giving the government the room to maneuver and manipulate and not about the protection of individuals and the rights for them.

MR. CROMARTIE: We have about two minutes left, and let me just call on someone who hasn't been called on. Yes, sir?

Q: (Off mike.)

MS. BANSAL: Well, in Xinjiang in particular, I think that really was underscored. When we asked – it was interesting because I think Michael, our chair, pointed out that many of our discussions with the religious leaders, the Muslim leaders in Xinjiang, the answers that we received were from government officials, so it was very hard to get a candid assessment of what was going on. But the one striking exception to that, the one candid answer we did get, was when we asked – we asked various questions about religious education of minors, whether or not Muslim schoolchildren are allowed to practice, be educated in their faith. And we were kind of going around – they didn't seem to understand us, and when we finally kind of said, it's about religious education, can a child less than 18 practice, the immediate answer we got was, no way.

So it was a very quick and – one of the few moments of what we felt was kind of candor, that just kind of slipped out, and it was immediately so stark.

MR. LAND: The other answer that seemed to be so stark by a spontaneous and instantaneous response was when we asked the Muslim leaders if there was any concern about al Qaeda activity or terrorist activity among the Muslim population. They looked at us like a cow looking at a new gate. It was like, no, of course not! It was like, what an odd and unusual question to ask. And of course when we had landed, the Chinese government officials had told us they had to restrict our movements even more than usual because of this bogus al Qaeda threat to attack us while we were there.

MR. CROMARTIE: Ladies and gentleman, we've run out of time. I want you to know we've got copies of the report over here. Feel free to take extras if you like. And we thank you so much for coming today.

(END)